

TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

AN ONGOING SERIES OF CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY FILMS PRESENTED IN 35MM BY THE YALE FILM STUDY CENTER

MONDAY
FEBRUARY 17, 2020
7 PM • WHITNEY
HUMANITIES CENTER

EXPERIMENTS IN FRENCH SILENT CINEMA

PRESENTED WITH SUPPORT FROM
PAUL L. JOSKOW '70 M.PHIL., '72 PH.D.



THE SMILING MADAME BEUDET (Dir. Germaine Dulac, 1922, 35mm, 32 min.)

Germaine Dulac made some 30 films between 1915 and 1935, most notably the Surrealist *THE SEASHELL AND THE CLERGYMAN* (1928) and the proto-Surrealist *THE SMILING MADAME BEUDET*. Dulac stated that cinema is “the art of interior life and of sensation...an art that makes reality, evades from it while incorporating it: the cinema spirit of beings and things.” She conveys the interior (fantasy) life of her protagonist—whose boorish, self-centered husband has rendered her perpetually melancholic and decidedly unsmiling—through slow motion, superimpositions, and distorted images; and the exterior life (marital combat) through simple but powerful signifiers such as Debussy’s “Jardins sous la pluie,” the dueling placements of a vase, and, most poignantly, a broken doll. A landmark of feminist cinema.



ENTR'ACTE (Dir. René Clair, 1924, 35mm, 22 min.)

René Clair (who would direct the major early French sound films *SOUS LES TOITS DE PARIS* and *LE MILLION*, and whose career extended to 1965) created *ENTR'ACTE* for the intermission (entr'acte) of the ballet *RELÂCHE* by Francis Picabia and Erik Satie at Paris's Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. A collaboration of the Paris Dada Circle, the film includes appearances by Picabia and Satie, who fire a cannon with a mind of its own; and Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray, who play chess on a board superimposed over the city. Random or free-associated images lead to an elaborate Mack Sennett-style chase enhanced by slow, fast, stop, and reverse motion; superimpositions; rapid editing; and dizzying upside-down and point-of-view shots. In the spirit of Dada (which originated as a reaction to World War I), the film mocks bourgeois society's sensibilities. The transformation of a ballerina (shown unflatteringly from below and wearing a garter belt and stockings) into a moustached, bearded man must have appealed to Duchamp: five years earlier he had audaciously ridiculed one of the world's most treasured art works by painting a moustache and goatee on the *Mona Lisa*.

*Musical accompaniment by
Donald Sosin and Joanna Seaton*
*Live intertitle translation by
Leana Hirschfeld-Kroen*

PARIS QUI DORT (PARIS ASLEEP) (Dir. René Clair, 1924, 16mm, 39 min.)

Clair's first film (which premiered after *ENTR'ACTE*) is a science fiction comedy in which a mysterious force has made time stand still at 3:25 a.m., freezing almost everyone in Paris in place. A small group who were not affected take advantage of the phenomenon, abandoning morality in the process. Clair's experimental techniques include charmingly immobilized actors, freeze frames, and slow and fast motion, but the film's most fascinating feature is its jaw-dropping location filming on the Eiffel Tower: *how* did they do it? Also known as *AT 3:25* and *THE CRAZY RAY*.

UN CHIEN ANDALOU (AN ANDALUSIAN DOG) (Dir. Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, 1929, 16mm, 16 min.)

In Buñuel's first film, he boldly proclaims his desire to open our eyes: the prologue features Buñuel himself performing an act that is shocking even today (warning: not for the squeamish). The film displays essential Surrealist elements: irrational time and space, free associations, startling metamorphoses, and incongruent juxtapositions (prefiguring Dalí's most famous paintings). Buñuel and Dalí (Spaniards who were part of the 1920s Parisian avant-garde) wrote the script by telling each other their dreams. Buñuel: “No idea or image that might lend itself to a rational explanation of any kind was accepted...The film was totally in keeping with the basic principle of Surrealism: ‘Psychic Automatism,’ unconscious, capable of returning to the mind its true functions, beyond any form of control by reason, morality or aesthetics.” Buñuel went on to a five-decade career, including such celebrated Surrealist films as *VIRIDIANA*, *THE EXTERMINATING ANGEL*, *BELLE DE JOUR*, and *THE DISCREET CHARM OF THE BOURGEOISIE*.

DID YOU KNOW: THE TITLE OF THE BALLET FOR WHICH *ENTR'ACTE* WAS MADE, *RELÂCHE* (RELEASED), WAS A DADAIST JOKE: THE SIGN “RELEASED” OUTSIDE A THEATER INDICATED THAT THE PERFORMANCE HAD BEEN CANCELLED. FITTINGLY, THE FIRST PERFORMANCE, SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER 29, 1924, *WAS* CANCELLED BECAUSE OF THE PRINCIPAL DANCER'S ILLNESS. THE BALLET, AND FILM, PREMIERED FIVE DAYS LATER.

NEXT UP: JOIN US FOR A VERY SPECIAL EVENING WITH JAZZ LEGEND AND RETIRED YALE SCHOOL OF MUSIC FACULTY MEMBER WILLIE RUFF. THE FILM STUDY CENTER WILL PRESENT THE PRESERVATION PREMIERE OF RUFF'S 1981 SHORT FILM *THE BEGINNINGS OF BEBOP*, WHICH FOLLOWS RUFF'S MUSICAL PARTNER DWIKE MITCHELL AND TRUMPETER DIZZY GILLESPIE AROUND NEW YORK CITY ON A TOUR OF HISTORIC LOCATIONS IN THE HISTORY OF BEBOP, INCLUDING AN UNPLANNED STOP AT THE HOME OF MILES DAVIS. SCREENING ON 16MM **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, AT 7PM.**